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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [illegible] DATE 12/25/81
RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE
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RELEASE DENIED ☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 3914
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AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2261
AMCONSUL DANANG 789

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 4056

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJECT: VU HONG KHANH PRESS CONFERENCE

1. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE VU HONG KHANH HELD PRESS CONFERENCE MORNING AUGUST 25 AT CONTINENTAL HOTEL. RELATIVELY FEW CORRESPONDENTS, INCLUDING ONLY TWO AMERICANS, ATTENDED.

2. MAIN PURPOSE OF CONFERENCE WAS TO PUBLICIZE KHANS ALLEGATIONS THAT GVN IS MAKING LIFE DIFFICULT FOR HIS CAMPAIGN WORKERS. FROM THE BEGINNING, SAID KHANH, "WE HAVE SEEN THAT

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THIS WOULD NOT BE A FREE AND FAIR ELECTION," A VERY REGRETTABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR VIETNAM. KHANH ADDED THAT HE IS "FORCED TO PROTEST TERRORIST ACTS DIRECTED AGAINST VNQDD MEMBERS."

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KHANH THEN TURNED MICROPHONE OVER TO PHAM THAI, VNQDD LEADER AND HEAD OF UPPER HOUSE SLATE 47.

3. THAI SAID THESE "TERRORIST" ACTS BEGAN MANY WEEKS AGO, BUT HAVE RECENTLY BECOME MUCH MORE BLATANT. HE THEN PROVIDED VARIOUS PARTICULARS: A VNQDD SUPPORTER ARRESTED AND BEATEN IN SAIGON; TWO CAMPAIGN WORKERS DISTRIBUTING KHANH LEAFLETS ARESTED AND LEAFLETS CONFISCATED (THIS, THAI NOTED, WAS REPORTED BY KHANH SUPPORTER GIAP VAN THAP); IN HUE, CAMPAIGN WORKERS DISTRIBUTING KHANH POSTERS WERE THREATENED xBY "ARMED MEN IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES"; IN PHU VANG VILLAGE (THUA THIEN) KHANH WORKERS PLANNED TO HOLD A RALLY BUT AUTHORITIES PROHIBITED GATHERINGS OF MORE THAN THREE PERSONS; IN DA NANG PARTY MEMBERS WORKING FOR KHANH WERE DETAINED, THEN TOLD TO STAY OUT OF TOWN; SEVERAL OTHER CAMPAIGN WORKERS WERE ARRESTED IN DA NANG," ALTHOUGH THEY CARRIED LEGAL PAPERS."

4. THAI CONCLUDED THAT, IN I CORPS, "MEMBERS OF ALL PARTIES ARE BEING PARALYZED." HE SAID THAT "WE ARE DETERMINED TO

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STRUGGLE TO PUT AN END TO THESE TERRORIST ACTIVITIES...WHY ARE ANTI-COMMUNSTS SUCH AS VNQDD ARRESTED IN SUCH AN ILLEGAL MANNER?"

5. IN QUESTION PERIOD WHICH FOLLOWED THAI WAS ASKED WHO PRESS COULD CONTACT IN I CORPS TO CONFIRM [illegible] CHARGES. THAI SUGGESTED THEY TALK WITH VNQDD PARTY LEADERS AT 30 NGUYEN DU STREET, DA NANG. CORRESPONDENT ASKED KHANH WHAT HE THOUGHT OF PRESIDENT JOHNONS ANNOUNCEMENT THAT AMERICAN ELECTION OBSERVERS WOULD COME TO VIETNAM. KHAN THOUGHT IDEA OF FOREIGN OBSERVERS IS EXCELLENT, BUT CAUTIONED THAT THEY COULD BE EFFECTIVE ONLY IF THEY GO TO THE VILLAGES. ASKED WHAT HE WOULD DO IF PRESSURE ON VNQDD PERSISTS, KHANH SAID THAT AHPROPRIATE MEASURES WOULD BE TAKEN: "WE WILL ORGANIZE DEMONSTPATIONS IN AREAS WHERE VNQDD CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES CONTINUE TO BE THREATENED."

6. UPI CORRESPONDENT ASKED KHANH IF HE AGREED WITH SEVERAL

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OTHER CANDIDATES THAT THIEU AND KY MUST RESIGN IN ORDER TO HAVE FAIR ELECTION. KHANH REPLIED THAT "IN A FEW MORE DAYS" CIVILIAN SLATES WILL HOLD JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE TO REQUEST THIEU AND KY TO RESIGN DURING CAMPAIGN AND TO PROPOSE

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FORMATION OF TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT TO SUPPERVISE ELECTIONS.

7. COMMENT:

A. WE HAVE SEEN NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT KHANHS CHARGES. WHILE SOME OF THE INCIDENTS MAY HAVE TAKEN PLACE, WE ARE INCLINED TO THINK IT LIKELY THAT THEY ARE DUE EITHER TO THE EXCEPTIONAL OVERZEALOUS OFFICIAL (SUCH AS THE DEPUTY PROVINCE CHIEF FOR SECURITY IN HE, MAJOR BAO) OF TO CAUSES HAVING NO CONNECTION WITH THE ELECTION (LOCAL FEUDS, NORMAL "PRECAUTIONS" AGAINST VC CADRE, ETC
)

B. WE UNDERSTAND THERE WILL BE A JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE BY THE CIVILIAN CANDIDATES, PROBABLY AUGUST 26. THE PURPOSE IS NOT CLEAR TO US, BUT COULD BE TO DEMAND THIEU-KY RESIGNATION. BUNKER

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